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ABSTRACT

This book holds that the evolution of the mind has given rise to great diversity of language and culture, each going along with a distinct adaptation to life specific ecosystems or geographical areas. Much like the wealth of plant and animal species is essential to biodiversity and ecological balance, diversity in the world's languages is vital to social balance. The same trend toward monocultures, deforestation, and urbanization recognized to threaten biodiversity threatens languages as well. Making an explicit link between language survival and environmental issues, it is argued that the extinction of languages is part of the larger picture of the progressive collapse of the global ecosystem. The struggle to preserve the rainforest cannot be separated from the struggle to maintain diverse cultures, and that the causes of language death, like that of ecological destruction, lie at the intersection of ecology and politics. Homage is paid to some of the world's last speakers of endangered languages. The book is divided into 8 chapters, with a detailed list of illustrations, references and suggestions for further reading, a bibliography, and an index. Illustrations, figures, and tables appear throughout. (KFT)

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